

SECTION I

Introduction

Recent emergencies such as the meningococcal and the *E. coli* O157 H:7 outbreaks, power outages, flooding, and earthquakes, remind us that the health and physical safety of King County residents are vulnerable to unexpected public health emergencies. Consequently, the Communicable Disease Control/Epidemiology Section (CD/EPI) and the Environmental Health Division (EHD) recognize the need for a manual that will assist the Public Health – Seattle & King County (PHSKC) staff to respond appropriately to such emergencies.

a sufficient threat to warrant the implementation of the county-wide disaster plan (the King County Emergency Operations Plan). Nonetheless, these events can lead to public health problems. For example, power outages can effect food storage. Inadequate temperature holding conditions can increase the risk of foodborne illness. Although PHSKC does not have primary responsibility for events such as chemical spills, citizens expect the Health Department to respond and to provide advice. If a disaster has been declared, all requests for assistance for groups or agencies should first be approved through the appropriate EOC (Emergency Operations Center).

In emergency situations, PHSKC staff must know who to contact at various agencies to coordinate relief efforts and avoid duplication of effort. In contrast to the health department's county wide disaster plan that delineates the responsibilities of the administrators within each health department division, this manual is intended to clarify the roles of CD/EPI, EHD, and staff at district offices in emergency situations and to be a supplement to the Disaster Manual.

Purpose of This Manual

- Provide useful background information that will help the district offices and field personnel to understand the respective roles of CD\EPI and EHD. This will help them to be prepared to participate in the health department's response.
- Provide materials and "tools" to assist the staff and field personnel in conducting health disaster assessments in emergency situations and to advise the public.
- Describe available health department and community resources to assist the staff and field personnel in dealing with environmental health and communicable disease concerns.
- Provide check lists specific to environmental health specialists, pharmacists, immunization personnel, and epidemiologists.

How to Use This Manual

When an emergency event occurs refer first to **Section 3** for the type of emergency. Read this information. At the end of these descriptions of the emergencies you will be referred to other documents within the manual.

Section 4 contains work check lists. These describe duties that could be performed during these situations. Supervisors can use these to make work assignments.

Section 5 makes suggestions for surveillance activities. District office personnel may participate in collecting surveillance data, however, these efforts should be coordinated by the director's office. The director's office will provide instructions to the district offices about the surveys as they are needed.

Section 6 contains fact sheets that can be used to inform the public about a public health issue. These can be used by any health department staff member to advise the public.

Section 7 contains sample press releases. These are provided for your information only. As always any press release should first be approved by the appropriate supervisor, division director and the director prior to disclosure. Inquiries pertaining to the actual press release, should be referred to the contact person listed on the press release.

Section 8 contains a list of resources for the general public.

Section 9 contains information on storing vaccine in an emergency.

Section 10 provides tips for organizing a mass immunization clinic. The need for such a clinic is determined by the Chief of Epidemiology. District office personnel and community volunteers will be used to operate the clinic.